

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Tala-Maddale**

The traditional art of 'talamaddale', a variant of Yakshagana theatre, too has gone virtual in times of COVID-19. A performance was streamed live on social media on June 13.

About:

- Tala-Maddale is an ancient form of performance dialogue or debate performance popular in the Karavali and Malnad regions of Karnataka and Kerala.
- The plot and content of the conversation is drawn from popular mythology but the performance mainly consists of an impromptu debate between characters involving sarcasm, puns, philosophy positions and humour.

Comparison with Yakshagana:

- It is a derived form of Yakshagana—a classical dance or musical form of art from the same region. The main plot is sung from the same oral texts used for the Yakshgana.
- Unlike the Yakshagana performance, in 'talamaddale,' the artists sit across in a place without any costumes and engage in testing their oratory skills based on the episode chosen.
- If music is common for both Yakshagana performance and 'talamaddale', the latter has only spoken word without any dance or costumes. Hence it is an art form minus dance, costumes and stage conventions.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**SIPRI Yearbook 2020**

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) launched the findings of SIPRI Yearbook 2020, which assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security.

Key findings:

- The nine nuclear-armed states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea—together possessed 13,400 nuclear weapons at the start of 2020, a decrease from the 13 865 nuclear weapons at the beginning of 2019.
- Despite an overall decrease in the number of nuclear warheads in 2019, all nuclear weapon-possessing states continue to modernize their nuclear arsenals.
- With 6,375 and 5,800 warheads, Russia and the United States together possess more than 90% of global nuclear weapons.
- China and Pakistan possess more nuclear weapons than India. It pegs the number of nuclear warheads in the Chinese arsenal at 320, while the nuclear forces of Pakistan and India are estimated to have 160 and 150 weapons, respectively. In 2019, India had 130-140 warheads.
- China is developing a nuclear triad for the first time, made up of new land- and sea-based missiles and nuclear-capable aircraft.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

- Location: SIPRI is an international institute based in Stockholm, Sweden.
- Established in: 1966.
- Purpose: It is dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. It provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

U.S President Donald Trump authorised sanctions against International Criminal Court (ICC) officials involved in investigations into possible war crimes by US troops or those of its allies.

About:

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) is a permanent judicial body based at The Hague in the Netherlands.
- It was created by the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (its founding and governing document), and began functioning on 1 July 2002 when the Statute came into force.
- The forum was established as a court of last resort to prosecute offences that would otherwise go unpunished, and has jurisdiction over four main crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression.
- 123 nations are States Parties to the Rome Statute and recognise the ICC's authority; the notable exceptions being the US, China, Russia, and India.

ICC vs ICJ

- Unlike the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the ICC is not part of the United Nations system, with the UN-ICC relationship being governed by a separate agreement.
- The ICJ, which is among the UN's 6 principal organs, mainly hears disputes between nations. The ICC, on the other hand, prosecutes individuals— its authority extending to offences committed in a member state or by a national of such a state.

Global Partnership On Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)

India joined the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI or Gee-Pay) as a founding member to support the responsible and human-centric development and use of AI.

About:

- India joined the league of leading economies including USA, UK, EU, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Singapore to launch the GPAI.
- GPAI is an international and multi-stakeholder initiative to guide the responsible development and use of AI, grounded in human rights, inclusion, diversity, innovation, and economic growth.
- This is also a first initiative of its type for evolving better understanding of the challenges and opportunities around AI using the experience and diversity of participating countries.
- GPAI will be supported by a Secretariat, to be hosted by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris, as well as by two Centers of Expertise- one each in Montreal and Paris.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Indian Gas Exchange (IGX)

Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister launched the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX), which is the first nationwide online delivery-based gas trading platform.

About:

- IGX has been incorporated as a wholly owned subsidiary of the IEX, which is India's energy market platform.
- IGX will be a delivery-based trading platform for delivery of natural Gas. The trading platform will enable market participants to trade in standardised gas contracts.
- The exchange is expected to facilitate transparent price discovery in natural gas, and facilitate the growth of the share of natural gas in India's energy basket. IGX is fully automated with web-based interface and it provides seamless trading experience to the customers.

How will this exchange work?

- The IGX is a digital trading platform that will allow buyers and sellers of natural gas to trade both in the spot market and in the forward market for imported natural gas across three hubs —Dahej and Hazira in Gujarat, and Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh.
- Imported Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) will be regassified and sold to buyers through the exchange, removing the requirement for buyers and sellers to find each other.
- The price of domestically produced natural gas is decided by the government. It will not be sold on the gas exchange.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

World Day To Combat Desertification And Drought

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is being observed on June 17, 2020 with the theme "Food. Feed. Fibre. - the links between consumption and land."

About:

- Date of observance: The day is observed every year on June 17.
- Objective of the day: To promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification.
- Background: This day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly resolution in 1995, after the day when United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was drafted.
- 2020 Theme: Food. Feed.Fibre. - the links between consumption and land
- This year's observance is focused on changing public attitudes to the leading driver of land degradation: humanity's relentless production and consumption.
- As populations become larger, wealthier and more urban, there is far greater demand for land to provide food, animal feed and fibre for clothing. Meanwhile, the health and productivity of existing arable land is declining, worsened by climate change.
- Clothing and footwear production causes 8 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, a figure predicted to rise almost 50 per cent by 2030.

Desertification according to United Nations

- Meaning: Desertification is the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. Desertification does not refer to the expansion of existing deserts.
- Goal 15 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states our resolve to halt and reverse land degradation.

Schizothorax Sikusirumensis

A new species of fish has been discovered in Arunachal Pradesh. The fish species is named as Schizothorax sikusirumensis.

About:

- The fish species belongs to genus Schizothorax.
- The name of this fish species has been derived from the name of the rivers where it was found. This fish was collected from the junction of River Siku and Sirum near Gakang area under Mebo circle of East Siang District.
- The fish inhabits the water logged area of torrential river drainage.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

India's First Mobile Covid-Testing Lab

India has set up its first mobile testing laboratory in a bid to meet the growing demand to conduct coronavirus disease (COVID-19) tests.

About:

- The mobile laboratory, with on-site Elisa, RtPCR & Bio-chem analysers, was created within eight days by a team from Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone Limited.
- The laboratory can be deployed at remote and inaccessible areas in the country, where there is no such facility.
- The laboratory belongs to the biosafety level 2 (BSL-II) category.

Biosafety Levels

- BSLs are ranked from one to four and are categorised on the basis of the organisms that the researchers are dealing with.
- The organisms include viruses, bacteria, fungi, parasites, etc. SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19, belongs to the BSL-II category.
- BSL-I is considered to be the least hazardous, while BSL-IV poses the maximum safety risk. Each level builds on the previous category, adding more layers of constraints and barriers.

NASA'S Gateway Lunar Orbiting Outpost

NASA recently finalised the contract for the initial crew module of the agency's Gateway lunar orbiting outpost. The contract, which is worth \$187 million has been awarded to Orbital Science Corporation of Dulles, Virginia, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Northrop Grumman Space.

About:

- NASA has issued this contract to design the habitation and logistics (HALO) support for the Gateway, which is a part of NASA's Artemis program that aims to send the first woman and the next man to the Moon by 2024.
- Essentially, the Gateway is a small spaceship that will orbit the Moon, meant for astronaut missions to the Moon and later, for expeditions to Mars.
- It will act as a temporary office and living quarters for astronauts, distanced at about 250,000 miles from Earth. The spaceship will have living quarters, laboratories for science and research and docking ports for visiting spacecraft.
- Further, astronauts will use the Gateway at least once per year and not stay around the year like they do on the International Space Station (ISS). Compared to the ISS, the Gateway is much smaller, while the ISS is about the size of a six-bedroom house.
- NASA has targetted the completion of the Gateway for 2026, while work on the spaceship is already underway. By 2022, NASA plans to ready the power and propulsion for the spaceship, which will be launched on a partner-provided commercial rocket.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q. "The ideas for creating a system of education should be aimed at promoting international co-operation and creating global citizens". What do you understand by this statement in the present-day scenario? Explain.

According to Rabindranath Tagore, the highest aim of education is not to give information but make our life in harmony with all existence. The promotion of international cooperation and creation of global citizens requires an education system that promotes the spirit of tolerance, peace, equality and cooperation.

Right education is the cornerstone to resolve contemporary global issues like pandemic crisis, economic slowdown, environmental degradation, unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, human rights abuse, gender disparity and even spread of misinformation threatening peace.

Education and Global citizens

- A global citizen has a trans national cooperative attitude and one who cherishes the values of equality, fairness and sustainability. In cultivation of such attitudes, development of the idea of peaceful coexistence in the value system of education is vital for dealing with current global issues.
- Dealing with the contemporary global challenges requires mutual cooperation among citizens, nations and international bodies and organisations. Among these stakeholders the efficacy of citizens holds its key in right education.

Key Challenges

- Dealing with global disasters: In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, it is necessary that the education system motivates the citizens to adopt a naturally empathetic attitude towards the people and countries severely affected by it.
- This also entails the responsibility of educating the masses about the precautions and survival strategies in such a pandemic.
- Environment Conservation: Education systems which are sensitive to environmental issues inspire countries, cities and regions, businesses and civil society members across the world to take action to accelerate cooperative climate action in support of the environment conservation programs such as the Global Climate Action Agenda.
- Inclusive development under globalisation: Securing socio- economic integration and development of all the people of the world through a free flow of goods, services, information, knowledge and people across all boundaries cannot become a reality without an education system targeting Inclusive development.
- Human rights violations: Intolerance and ignorance is the root cause of conflict and insecurity which, in turn, results in violations of human rights. Education that can instil the spirit of non violence is necessary in bringing sustainable peace especially in terrorism affected areas.
- Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDGs also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.
- SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all.

Indian Scenario

- The values of Indian education system such as dignity, truthfulness, fairness and responsibility complement the directive principle enshrined in Article 51 (promotion of international peace and security) of the Indian Constitution.
- However on the level of behavioural change and transformation of Indian citizens to global citizens, appropriate educational reforms are needed as envisaged under Draft Education policy 2020.
- Assimilating the views of national luminaries like Rabindranath Tagore, who believed the one of the main objectives of education is to make pupils a global citizen and promote universal brotherhood.
- Agent of Change: The India diaspora has been successful agents of change across the globe in the field of technology (by leading the largest IT companies) , finance, culture (in literature and in various art forms) because universal brotherhood (vasudeva kutumbakam) has been one of the main ethos of Indian education system since ancient times that enables Indian citizens to assimilate themselves in different cultures.

Conclusion

- Thus education holds a major stake in resolving international challenges such as boundary conflict, cyber crimes, food security, distress migration and biodiversity conservation by bringing about attitudinal changes among people and making them global citizens.
- Multicultural education is one solution that could bring rationality by incorporating the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different cultural backgrounds.
- There is an urgent need for prospective reforms such as eliminating illiteracy universally, increasing gender sensitivity, and rationalization of the education system.